

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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For Immediate Release

MAY 11, 2004

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on April 6, 2004, **CHRISTOPHER S. SWOPE**, age 26, of Murphysboro, Illinois, was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury sitting in Benton, Illinois, in a two-count superseding indictment, charging him with conspiracy to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marihuana and possession of a firearm by a felon. The violations took place between February 2004, and April 1, 2004, in Jackson County. An indictment is a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury. SWOPE is being held without bond pending a July 12, 2004, jury trial.

The conspiracy charge carries a penalty of between 5-40 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to \$2 million, and a term of at least 4 years' supervised release. The firearm charge carries a penalty of not more than 10 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of 3 years' supervised release.

Information for the indictment was obtained through the cooperative effort of the Carbondale Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Murphysboro Police Department, Southern Illinois Enforcement Group, and Drug Enforcement Administration, pursuant to those agencies' participation in the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative in the Southern District of Illinois. Under the Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative, federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors are working together to prosecute drug dealers, felons in possession of firearms, and criminals that use firearms to commit violent offenses or drug trafficking offenses. The Jackson County Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative is a joint and cooperative effort of the United States Attorney's Office, Jackson County States Attorney's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Carbondale Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Southern Illinois Enforcement Group, and Murphysboro Police Department.

The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Amanda A. Robertson for prosecution.